

Vandamme was to attack St. Amand on the left. General Girard was posted on the left of Vandamme, and the Imperial Guards were stationed as a reserve before Fleurus. At two o'clock Napoleon sent an order to Marshal Ney informing him of his intended attack upon the Prussians, and ordering him to drive off whatever was in front of him and then to turn and envelop the Prussians.

At three o'clock a similar despatch was sent off urgently pressing the execution of Napoleon's instructions. It was not until this hour that the Emperor was able to concentrate his forces so as to attack the Prussians simultaneously. The battle then began with uncommon fury along the whole Prussian line. The village of St. Amand was vigorously defended. It formed the strength of the Prussian right, and "from the intersection of several gardens and hedges, was very capable of defence, although so much in advance of the rest of the Prussian position. After a continued attack for two hours the French had only obtained possession of half the village of St. Amand; that of Ligny had been taken and retaken several times. The French pursued their success at St. Amand by pushing light troops across the rivulet of Ligny, who then formed on the left bank. The position of Blucher's army was in many respects defective. The main body being drawn up on the heights, and the remainder posted in the villages below, the French artillery was enabled to range with destructive effect upon the reinforcements despatched during the murderous conflict raging in the contested villages. The Prussians having been re-enforced by the 2d brigade of General Zieten's corps, were now vigorously attacked by the division of General Girard, who, supported by a portion of General Vandamme's corps and his reserve cavalry, attempted to carry the heights towards Bry. Marshal Blucher, in order to avert the threat-June at Wavre, after angrily remonstrating with Grouchy for not marching to the assistance of Napoleon, but who lived to be Marshal and Minister of war under Louis Philippe, must not be confused with General Girard who commanded a division at Ligny, where he found a glorious death. See Dorsey Gardner (p. 45) on the errors caused by the confusion of these names. It is perhaps unnecessary to explain that a corps consists of two or more divisions.